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SUBJECT: PEACEKEEPING AND THE NIGERIAN ARMY'S OPERATIONAL TEMPO

Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for Reasons 1.5 (B & D).

11. (C) Summary: Meetings with senior Nigerian defense staff involved in peacekeeping revealed Nigeria has recently changed its PKO rotation schedule from one year to six months. Given current and future commitments, this will require the deployment of 24 units per year, and a reduction in the capability of non-deployed units to perform operations. PKO training is conducted at all levels in the Army, with an emphasis on train-the-trainer methods, in response to lessons learned in missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The Nigerian Army sees a resumption of security assistance programs with the U.S. as vital to increasing their PKO capacity. End Summary.

12. (C) The Director of Peacekeeping Operations at Army Headquarters, Brigadier General Hassan, and the Chief of Training and Operations at Defense Headquarters, General I.A. Dikko, laid out the commitments of Nigeria's Army for peacekeeping operations during meetings with PolMilOff, DAO, and IO/PHO Director on October 19, 2004.

13. (C) The Nigerian Army currently has two battalions dedicated to each UNAMSIL and UNMIL (Note: Nigeria will withdraw one battalion from UNAMSIL in November 04. End Note.); a company in Darfur; military observers (MILOBs) in Southwest Sahara, Cote D'Ivoire, and DROC; plus units deployed internally in the Bakassi, Plateau State, and the Niger Delta. There are two battalions designated to replace units in UNAMSIL and UNMIL. Future commitments include at least two additional companies for Darfur, two units designated to the ECOWAS Standby Brigade, a company of military police to Burundi, a company of mechanized infantry plus a troop of engineers to a French-sponsored RECAP exercise in Benin, and a signal company to Monrovia in November. Nigeria may also designate up to an additional brigade as part of the AU's proposed standby force. The UN standard battalion for peace-support operations is 776 soldiers, larger than a Nigerian battalion. This means that non-organic elements must be stripped from other units to augment each deploying battalion.

14. (SBU) The Army has recently moved from a one-year to a six-month deployment schedule. This means that twice as many units will be tasked for deployment in a given year. Training for units designated for peacekeeping operations lasts six to eight weeks prior to deployment. The Director for Peacekeeping Operations at Army Headquarters said that the shorter rotation, coupled with Nigeria's commitments, means that 24 units will need to deploy on an annual basis. He stated that the Army was stretching to meet all of its commitments.

15. (SBU) All units in the Army are involved in PKO training. The Infantry Center recently opened a peacekeeping operations branch with assistance from UK short-term training teams. The intention of this division is to run training courses for junior officers who will then become unit trainers. There is a PKO segment in all-officer professional military courses, and a strategic-level PKO training center, funded by the international donor community, is opening at the National War College in Abuja. Units designated for PKOs also receive the pre-deployment training described above, which focuses on professional skills and includes two days on human rights and the Law of Land Warfare by ICRC. All training programs are based on the UN standard training model, adjusted to fit operational requirements.

16. (SBU) To build peacekeeping capacity in the Army, General Hassan stressed the need to resume bilateral training and IMET. He said that an increased focus on logistical support and the creation of PKO doctrine would lead to a significant increase in capacity. Other improvements suggested include streamlining the donor aid process, targeting of aid to countries contributing the most troops, and reducing stringent conditionalities on assistance.

17. (C) Comment: The Nigerians painted a picture of a very robust PKO training that may be an overstatement of reality. Obviously, the Nigerian military wanted to send the message that they are ready, willing and able to participate in PKOs. CAMPBELL